Overview of Libby Amphibole Asbestos Research Initiative

Purpose
EPA and ASTDR are committed to helping the public health community better understand and manage adverse health effects from Libby Amphibole (LA) exposure.

As a result of that commitment, the two agencies have agreed to an $8 million research initiative in Libby, MT, to advance the scientific understanding of such health effects.

Responds to Identified Data Gaps
ATSDR's May 2003 Public Health Assessment recommended more research on LA health effects.

Also, EPA's Libby Toxicity Assessment Action Plan established a number of project areas to provide information to support the Libby Superfund baseline risk assessment and future evaluations of the effectiveness of ongoing remedial actions.

By helping fill in the knowledge gaps about LA identified in the assessment and action plan, the project is important to enable scientists, clinicians and policy makers to prevent and/or manage past, current and future exposures more effectively.

Research Specifics
The multi-part research, which will involve public health researchers in Libby as well as local organizations (in an advisory capacity), includes:

- Epidemiological studies of persons exposed to LA;
- Enhancement of systems to track health outcomes related to exposure and linking that information with other databases; and
- Creation of computer models that will help explain what level of exposure leads to health effects.

The research also includes completion of a comparative study of X-rays to digital images.

Funding and Timing
The work is being funded by Superfund appropriations from EPA and may begin as early as September 2008. It estimated to last about five years.

EPA and ATSDR are jointly announcing the research initiative in Libby, MT, this week to the Lincoln County Commissioners as well as community organizations.

Key Benefits
Public health researchers will collaborate with local organizations that best understand the Libby community.

The research will provide new information about lower level LA exposures that can help doctors and others better respond to emerging health issues in populations that were exposed to LA, including those exposed as children.